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ABSTRACT

The lack of a clear role definition for the special education supervisor has resulted in an interpretation of the position as that of a facilitator, planner, and legal rights guarantor for exceptional children. To determine whether differences existed between the self-perceived supervisory methods of special education administrators and their actual and preferred supervisory behaviors as perceived by special education teachers, and to gauge whether demographic variables influence the teachers' preferrences and perceptions, 66 Louisiana special education supervisors and 264 special education teachers were mailed the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (form 1). A total of 50 supervisors and 200 teachers (4 from each of the 50 schools) participated. No significant differences were identified between the supervisors' and the teachers' perceptions of actual supervisory behavior; however, there existed a substantial difference between teachers' perceptions of, and teachers' preferences for, their supervision. The teachers perceived their supervisors as more directive, but preferred them to be less directive. Female teachers preferred more direction than males, and non-Caucasian teachers preferred more direction than Caucasians on various tasks. The bibliography contains 9 references. (KM)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTUAL AND PREFERRED SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS AS PERCEIVED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND AS SELF-PERCEIVED BY SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPERVISORS IN LOUISIANA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the self-perceived supervisory behaviors of Louisiana supervisors' actual and preferred supervisory behaviors in the area of special education. Findings indicated no substantial differences between supervisors' and teachers' perceptions of actual supervisory behaviors. Significant differences were found between teachers' preferences for supervisory behaviors and supervisors' self-perceived supervisory behaviors. Degrees of differences existed between supervisors' self-perceptions of their supervisory behaviors and teachers' perceptions of those behaviors, and between teachers' perceptions of actual and preferred supervisory behaviors because of certain demographic variables.

Introduction

Traditionally, supervision has occurred in close proximity to the work setting. The supervisory role of the special education supervisor, however, was considered to be external to the school organization.

The lack of a clear role description for the special education supervisor has resulted in an interpretation of the role as that of a provider of services for exceptional children. Hebert and Miller,[1] Prillaman and Richardson,[2] Robson,[3] Woods,[4] and Burrello and Zadnik[5] found that the level to which a supervisor was judged effective in the role was a function of the perceptions held by other administrators and by teachers.

Sage and Burrello identified three dimensions of the role of the special education supervisor: facilitator, planner, and legal rights guarantor. A supervisor's success in these areas would require the use of varied managerial behaviors with different personnel constituencies.[6]

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[1]Elizabeth A. Hebert and Steven I. Miller, "Role Conflict and the Special Education Supervisor: A Qualitative Analysis," The Journal of Special Education 19, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 215-229.

[2]Douglas Prillaman and Robert Richardson, "State Certification-Endorsement Requirements For Special Education Administrators," The Journal of Special Education 19, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 231-236.

[3]Donald L. Robson, "Administering Educational Services For the Handicapped: Role Expectations and Perceptions," Planning and Changing 12, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 183-189.

[4]Joanne Webster Woods, "The Relationship of Teacher-Perceived Value of Supervisory Tasks to Supervisory Job Description," Dissertation Abstracts International 43, no. 06 (December 1982): 1789-1790A.

[5]Leonard C. Burrello and David J. Zadnik, "Critical Success Factors of Special Education Administrators," The Journal of Special Education 20, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 367-377.

[6]Daniel D. Sage and Leonard C. Burrello, Policy and Management in Special Education (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986), 205-212.

Sergiovanni, using Herzberg's two-factor motivational theory, reported that factors within the work place may be perceived by educators as either job satisfiers or job dissatisfiers. A factor, identified as a satisfier for one individual, may be a dissatisfier for another individual and vice versa.[7] Supervision, therefore, must be perceived as a support system in which supervisors vary their supervisory behaviors to accommodate the highest level of employee satisfaction.

Teachers reported the most observed supervisory behaviors were directive, collaborative, and non-directive. For maximum benefits, a supervisory should use these behaviors in combination.[8]

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were differences between the self-perceived supervisory behaviors of special education supervisors and their actual and preferred supervisory behaviors as perceived by selected special education teachers. An additional objective was to determine if differences existed between special education teachers' perceptions of special education supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and teachers' preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors because of certain demographic variables.

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[7]Thomas Sergiovanni, "Factors Which Affect Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction of Teachers," The Journal of Educational Administration 5, no. 1 (May 1967): 66-82.

[8]Isobel L. Pfeiffer and Jane B. Dunlap, Supervision of Teachers: A Guide to Improving Instruction (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1982), 113-139.

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of all Louisiana public school special education supervisors and teachers. Louisiana has 66 school districts; 64 parish systems and two city systems.

The sample included a total of 330 subjects: 66 supervisors and 264 teachers. From the 66 districts, a total of 50 school districts participated in the study. The 50 supervisors each selected four teachers in their system to participate. Therefore, 50 supervisors and 200 teachers returned completed questionnaires for a sample return response of 75 percent (N = 250).

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ), Form 1. This instrument was designed to measure supervisors' self-perceived and teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual and/or preferred supervisory behaviors.[9]

Form 1 of the SBDQ is an ordinal scale which includes items in eight task areas. It yields a total score; three dimensional scores: Directive, Collaborative, and Non-directive; and eight subscale scores. Only Subscale VIII, Evaluating Instruction and Instructors, was used in this study. The eight categories of Subscale VIII are Problem Solving, Establishing Procedures, Quantitative Objectives, Evaluation Based on Research, Self-Evaluation, Defines Effective

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[9]Walter E. Sistrunk, A Manual for the Administration of the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaires, Forms 1 and 2 (n.p., 1981), 1.

Teaching, Selection of Evaluation Instrument, and Action Research. The purpose of these eight items is to assess instructional evaluation and the tasks and behaviors of those who determine policies and procedures for its implementation.

Results

The data were analyzed to determine whether teachers and supervisors differed in their perceptions of supervisory behaviors of special education supervisors on each of the eight items on the SBDQ, Form 1, Subscale VIII, Evaluating Instruction and Instructors; the total subscale; and on the three dimensions of Directive, Collaborative, and Non-directive. An examination of the data revealed no significant difference between teachers' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors for the total subscale nor for the three dimensional scores.

The comparisons of teachers' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors when the individual items of the subscale were considered revealed that teachers and supervisors did not vary significantly in their perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors on any of the individual items in the subscale, except in the area of Defines Effective Teaching. Supervisors perceived that a better understanding existed between supervisors and teachers as to what constituted effective teaching than did teachers.

Further evaluation did not reveal congruence between teachers' and supervisors' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory

behaviors on the three dimensions. Supervisors perceived themselves to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive. Teachers perceived their supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive.

The data revealed significant differences between teachers' preferences for supervisors supervisory behaviors and supervisors' perceptions of their actual supervisory behaviors for the overall total subscale. Teachers' preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors and supervisors' perceptions of their actual supervisory behaviors varied significantly on the Directive dimension.

Significant differences between teachers' preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors and for supervisors' perceptions of their actual supervisory behaviors were found on five of the subscale items: Establishes Procedures, Quantitative Objectives, Evaluation Based on Research, Self-Evaluation, and Selection of Evaluation Instruments.

Follow-up testing revealed that teachers preferred that their supervisors be more collaborative than non-directive or directive on each of the five subscale items. Supervisors, however, perceived their supervisory behaviors as more collaborative than directive or non-directive on each of these items.

The comparison between teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and their preferences for the supervisory behaviors of supervisors differed significantly for the overall subscale. The data revealed that teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors differed from their preferences for

supervisory behaviors of supervisors on the Directive dimension. Teachers' perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more directive than they would prefer.

The data revealed a significant difference between teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and their preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors on each of the eight items in the subscale.

Post hoc results revealed that on the items of Problem Solving, Establishing Procedures, Quantitative Objectives, Defines Effective Teaching, and Action Research, there was congruence between teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and their preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors. Teachers both perceived and preferred their supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive on these five subscale items.

On the three items of Evaluation Based on Research, Self-Evaluation, and Selection of Evaluation Instruments, teachers perceived the actual supervisory behaviors of supervisors to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive. Teachers' preferences for supervisory behaviors on these three items were more collaborative than non-directive or directive.

The demographic variables of gender, race, classroom designation, campus classification, and area of exceptionality were used to determine teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and their preferences for the supervisory behaviors of supervisors.

Both male and female teachers perceived supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive when defining effective teaching. On the subscale item of Quantitative Objective, males preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive in their supervisory behaviors. Females preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive in their supervisory behaviors.

For the subscale item of Problem Solving based on race, Caucasians and Non-Caucasians perceived supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more directive than collaborative or non-directive. Caucasians preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive in their supervisory behaviors. Non-Caucasians preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive.

For the subscale item of Establishing Procedures based on race, Caucasians preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive, while Non-Caucasians preferred supervisors to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive in their supervisory behaviors.

Differences were found on the subscale item of Defines Effective Teaching when the variable of classroom designation was considered on three levels: resource, self-contained, and combination. Resource room teachers perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more non-directive than collaborative or directive, while both self-contained and combination room teachers perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive.

Differences were found on the subscale item of Selection of Evaluation Instruments when the variable of campus classification was considered. Teachers at all three campus classifications: elementary, secondary, and other, perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more directive than collaborative or non-directive.

No significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors or for teachers' preferences for supervisors' supervisory behaviors when areas of exceptionality taught were considered.

Conclusions

Special education teachers and their supervisors did not vary significantly in their perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors. There was a substantial difference between teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors and teachers' preferences for supervisory behaviors of supervisors. Teachers perceived supervisors to be more directive, but preferred they be less directive.

Supervisors perceived themselves to be more collaborative than directive or non-directive on items for assessing instructional evaluation. Teachers preferred their supervisors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive in this area.

Teachers' perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors were more directive than teachers' preferences for their supervisors' supervisory behaviors.

Some variations were found when certain demographic variables were considered. Females preferred more direction than males. Non-Caucasians preferred more direction than Caucasians on various supervisory tasks.

Resource room teachers perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more non-directive than collaborative or directive, but self-contained and combination room teachers perceived their supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors to be more collaborative than non-directive or directive. Teachers did not differ substantially in their perceptions of supervisors' actual supervisory behaviors because of campus classification or when areas of exceptionality taught were considered.

Discussion

The results from this study indicate that special education supervisors should utilize the results of documented research to alter their leadership style to fit the situation, the task, and the individual teacher. The primary objective for supervisors is to establish congruence between their self-perceived behaviors and teachers' perceptions of actual and preferred supervisory behaviors.

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